

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-2004  
JULY 2, 2002***

***Operations and Services  
Forensic Services NWSPD 10-20***

***ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION***

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**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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**Certified by:** OS5 (D. Wernly)

**Type of Issuance:** Initial.

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:*** This directive supersedes Weather Service Operations Manual D-90, “Weather Support for Accident Investigations and Litigation,” issuances 97-2 and 97-8 dated February 19, and August 15, 1997, respectively.

Signed by Gregory A. Mandt                      June 25, 2002  
Gregory A. Mandt                                      Date  
Director, Office of Climate,  
Water, and Weather Services

**Accident Notification**

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1. Objective. The objective of this Instruction is to ensure National Weather Service Headquarters (WSH) and the appropriate regional headquarters (RH) receive timely notification of any known major aviation and marine accidents; or of any known aviation, marine, or surface accidents where weather is suspected to be a factor.

2. Local Station Pre-accident Planning. The National Weather Service (NWS) offices will coordinate with the nearest National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other appropriate Government offices (e.g., FAA, United States Coast Guard), and with civil authorities, to ensure prompt notification whenever an aircraft mishap occurs within the county warning area of the office; or whenever a suspected weather factor major marine accident occurs within its forecast area of responsibility. Preplanning for such an occurrence will contribute to efficient investigation support. NWS offices will prepare and have available for immediate use an itemized list of steps to be taken locally. All employees should be familiar with the contents of this list. The list will include, but not be limited to:

- a. detailed station procedures;
- b. telephone numbers of local NTSB and other appropriate Government offices and civil authorities; and
- c. the names and telephone numbers of key personnel in the responsible NWS RH; Aviation Weather Center (AWC) at Kansas City, Missouri; the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit, or the Honolulu Weather Forecast Office, as appropriate; and the appropriate NWS office(s) with marine forecast responsibility.

3. Procedures Following the Notification of an Aviation Accident. Any NWS office made aware of an aircraft accident should promptly notify the nearest FAA or NTSB office, unless it is evident that either of these agencies already has the information. Section 3.2 provides instruction for notifying WSH and RH.

3.1 Surface Observations. Upon notification of an aircraft mishap in the general vicinity (within a 25 nautical-mile radius) of an NWS office having Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS) augmentation responsibilities, the office should take, record, and disseminate a special observation in accordance with instructions in the applicable weather observers handbook in use by the NWS. In circumstances where an ASOS platform, whether augmented or completely automated, provides the observations at, or nearest to, the mishap site, the NWS office responsible for issuing the Notification Report (see section 3.2.2) will retrieve the five-minute data during the period from one hour either side of the mishap. The above requirement assumes the office has received timely notification (within 11 hours) of the mishap. It is also contingent on the capability of the duty personnel at the office to retrieve the data. A hard copy of the ASOS five-minute data, or the medium from which hard copy can be produced, will be retained at the office for 30 days, except when instructed otherwise by the Forensic Services Manager. As an alternative to the above procedures, the ASOS Operations and Monitoring Center may download the required observations upon request by the NWS office or the Forensic Services Program.

3.2 Notification Report (Aviation). Upon receiving notification from the FAA, or becoming otherwise aware of a Major Aircraft Accident, or a known or suspected Weather Factor Accident, the appropriate NWS office will submit a Notification Report as soon as possible, except in the circumstances as noted below.

Discretion and judgment will be required in connection with notification reports for missing aircraft and military aircraft accidents. When an aircraft is missing, especially for two to three days or more, the location, time, and/or the weather factor circumstances of the accident may be difficult to ascertain. In general, a Report should be submitted when there is the capability to provide factual and comprehensive information to meet the purposes of the Notification Report as stated in section 3.2.1.

Background information surrounding a military aircraft accident is frequently difficult to obtain. Moreover, military crew normally use weather products generated by the military. The submission of Reports related to military accidents should be limited to those cases where

sufficient background information is available and the accident is known to have resulted in one or more civilian fatalities or significant property damage.

3.2.1 Purpose. The purpose of the Notification Report is to provide timely, factual, and comprehensive information to the Assistant Administrator for Weather Services and other concerned NWS officials in order for them to:

- brief key officials of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of Commerce;
- respond to queries from outside agencies;
- initiate an internal inquiry, if required; and
- take prompt remedial action, if required.

3.2.2 Initiating Offices. The NWS office having county warning responsibility for the location in which the accident occurs will initiate the Notification Report. For occurrences outside of the contiguous 48 states, the NWS office with public warning responsibility for the location of the accident should initiate a Notification Report provided it has sufficient information.

3.2.3 Notification from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). FAA Order 8020.11, Aircraft Accident and Incident Notification, Investigation and Reporting, requires the FAA Air Traffic field facility receiving the first report of an aircraft accident/incident to notify the nearest NWS office concerning all formal accidents. As an alternative, pending formal agreement between overlapping FAA/NWS regions, FAA Order 8020.11 permits FAA facilities within the signatory FAA region to notify a pre-designated NWS office (per state or states). Additionally, if acceptable to an FAA region, the appropriate NWS RH can arrange for accomplishing accident notification via automated means, e.g., the FAA's Regional Automated Notification System (RANS). Various FAA regions have implemented the RANS option.

However, regardless of the notification arrangement in place, if the NWS office receiving notification from the FAA is NOT the office responsible for issuing the Notification Report, the receiving NWS office is responsible for passing the information on to the appropriate NWS office as soon as possible.

Formal accidents, as defined by the FAA, fall within one of the following categories:

- an air carrier accident,
- all accidents causing serious injury or fatality when the flight was operating on an Instrument Flight Rules plan or special Visual Flight Rules plan,
- any accident wherein it is suspected that the FAA's air traffic operations are involved, or

- any accident involving adverse weather when the flight crew was weather-briefed by FAA personnel.

FAA Form 8020-3, "Facility Accident Notification Record," lists the phone numbers of the parties and offices to be notified. The appropriate NWS RH should periodically contact their FAA counterparts to ensure the telephone numbers are correct and up to date. The air traffic field facility involved may be an Air Traffic Control Tower, an Air Route Traffic Control Center, an Automated Flight Service Station, or a Regional Communications Control Center, depending on the circumstances surrounding the accident/incident. The FAA facility report will include the following information (when available):

- identification of the flight (name of airline, pilot, aircraft type, civil registration number);
- the location, date, and time of accident;
- a brief description, including number on board and fatalities;
- the source or originator of the report; and
- if a weather briefing was furnished (and by what office).

3.2.4 Format. Notification Reports issued by NWS offices will be transmitted in the format below. They should include, but not be confined to, information on all items listed. Do NOT include any conjectures or opinions as to the cause of the accident. If information on an item is unknown or not available, indicate "UNKN" or "N/A," as applicable.

TO: FORENSIC SERVICES MANAGER (W/OS52)  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
C/O TELECOMMUNICATIONS GATEWAY  
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20910

INFO - APPLICABLE RH ... ATTN RAM (OR EQUIVALENT)

ALPHA - IDENTIFICATION OF THE FLIGHT: AIRLINE AND FLIGHT  
NUMBER, PILOT (IF GENERAL AVIATION), AIRCRAFT TYPE,  
REGISTRATION NUMBER, ETC.

BRAVO - LOCATION, DATE, AND TIME OF ACCIDENT.

CHARLIE - BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT, INCLUDING NUMBER  
ABOARD AND FATALITIES.

- DELTA - THE LATEST TRANSMITTED SURFACE OBSERVATION PRIOR TO AND THE FIRST TRANSMITTED OBSERVATION SUBSEQUENT TO THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT FOR NEAREST REPORTING LOCATION(S). FOR ASOS SITES (IF AVAILABLE), INCLUDE THE TWO NEAREST FIVE-MINUTE OBSERVATIONS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ACCIDENT TIME. INCLUDE STATION IDENTIFIER(S), DATE(S), AND TIMES OF OBSERVATIONS.
- ECHO - TERMINAL FORECAST(S) FOR NEAREST LOCATION (IF APPROPRIATE) INCLUDE IDENTIFIER, DATE, AND VALID TIME DESIGNATION.
- FOXTROT - LOCAL WINDS ALOFT FROM UPPER-AIR SOUNDINGS AT THE NEAREST UPPER-AIR STATION; AND/OR OTHER AVAILABLE OBSERVED UPPER AIR WIND INFORMATION (E.G., FROM WSR-88D, WIND PROFILERS) IF CONSIDERED TO BE MORE REPRESENTATIVE. FOR LANDING AND TAKE-OFF ACCIDENTS - INCLUDE WINDS UP TO 3000 FEET AGL. FOR OTHER TYPE ACCIDENTS - INCLUDE LEVELS CORRESPONDING TO AIRCRAFT'S SERVICE CEILING, IF KNOWN.
- GOLF - AWC/AAWU IN-FLIGHT ADVISORIES AND CENTER WEATHER ADVISORIES IN EFFECT IF READILY AVAILABLE IN THE OFFICE DATA BASE (INCLUDING ENTIRE TEXT[S], IF POSSIBLE).
- HOTEL - WEATHER BRIEFING/DOCUMENTATION FURNISHED BY (NAME) WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE OR (NAME) FAA FLIGHT SERVICE STATION, IF KNOWN. NEGATIVE STATEMENT, WHERE APPLICABLE.

(NAME, TITLE, OFFICE)

The Notification Report will express all times, including observation times, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). In Item CHARLIE, the description should be as concise as possible. The author of the report should avoid sensational or graphically descriptive terms regarding the manner of death or extent of injuries.

**3.2.5 Method of Transmission.** Transmit Notification Reports via the Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS). Initiating offices will use a World Meteorological Organization (WMO) heading and AWIPS Identifier (AI) as directed by the NWS Communications Identification Policy. For the Notification Report issued within the conterminous NWS regions, the WMO heading is "NOUS5i CCCC" where "i" identifies the geographic area and the "CCCC" is the originating office; the AI is "OAVxxx" where "xxx" is the location identifier. The equivalent to "NOUS" in the Alaska Region is "NOAK." The equivalent in the Pacific Region is "NOHW" and "NOPQ" for Hawaii and Guam respectively.

Note: Those NWS offices not yet transitioned to final NWS communication identifications may continue using their existing WMO heading (e.g., ADMN10, ADMN28).

RH officials should use their discretion and good judgment as to whether, in addition to a report, a telephone call is needed to notify WSH officials (e.g., a weather-related accident, involving an air carrier and resulting in fatalities, occurs during non-administrative hours). Home telephone numbers of key NWS officials are included in the current Hydrometeorology Duty Officer Manual maintained by the Performance and Awareness Division in the Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services.

4. Notification Report (Marine). An NWS office will submit a Notification Report whenever the office becomes aware a suspected weather factor accident or Major Marine Accident has occurred within its forecast area of responsibility. An NWS office should also submit a report whenever the office becomes aware of a missing marine vessel where weather is suspected to be a factor or when it appears that the criteria for Major Marine Accident classification may be met when the fate of the vessel is determined.

4.1 Purpose. The purpose of the Notification Report is to provide timely information to senior NWS management and enable management to respond to queries from within and outside of NOAA.

4.2 Format. The report should include the best information available at the time, without unnecessarily holding it up. The United States Coast Guard may be contacted to get specific information. However, the United States Coast Guard will likely be busy responding to the event, and initially unable to provide much early assistance. The NWS offices will transmit Notification Reports for marine accidents in the format below. They should include, but not be limited to, information on all items listed. If information on an item is unknown or not available, indicate "UNKN" or "N/A," as applicable.

TO:	FORENSIC SERVICES MANAGER (W/OS52) NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE C/O TELECOMMUNICATIONS GATEWAY SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20910
INFO -	APPLICABLE RH...ATTN MARINE PROGRAM LEADER
ALPHA -	DESCRIPTION OF VESSEL: NAME, TYPE, SIZE - LENGTH OR TONNAGE
BRAVO -	LOCATION (LATITUDE/LONGITUDE IN DEGREES AND TENTHS), TIME, AND DATE OF ACCIDENT.
CHARLIE -	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT INCLUDING, IF KNOWN: DEPARTURE POINT OF VESSEL, DATE OF DEPARTURE AND DATE OF FIRST DISTRESS SIGNAL, NUMBER OF FATALITIES (OR MISSING), AND PROPERTY OR ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE.

- DELTA - LIST THE LAST OBSERVED WINDS AND SEAS FROM ANY BUOYS/COAST GUARD STATIONS/SHIP REPORTS, SURFACE OBSERVATIONS (IF THE ACCIDENT IS NEAR LAND) WITHIN 60 NAUTICAL MILES OF THE ACCIDENT. INCLUDE IDENTIFIER, TIME, AND DATE OF OBSERVATIONS.
- ECHO - FIRST PERIOD FORECAST OF THE LAST MARINE PRODUCT ISSUED BEFORE THE ACCIDENT FOR THE AREA INVOLVED. INCLUDE AREA IDENTIFIER, DATE, AND VALID TIME OF FORECAST.
- FOXTROT - WARNINGS AND ADVISORIES IN EFFECT (INCLUDE TIME OF ISSUANCE).
- GOLF - ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, SUCH AS HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE OR FUEL SPILL.

(NAME, TITLE, OFFICE)

The Notification Report will express all times, including observation times, in UTC. In Item CHARLIE, the description should be as concise as possible. The author of the report should avoid sensational or graphically descriptive terms regarding the manner of death or extent of injuries.

4.3 Method of Transmission. Instructions detailed in section 3.2.5, relating to the transmission of aviation reports, are also applicable to marine reports. Send additional information, which may not have been available when the marine accident Notification Report was initially submitted, within two working days in the same format as identified in section 4.2.

5. Surface Accidents. In most cases, instructions contained in the NWSI 10-1901, "Significant Event Reporting," in conjunction with procedures detailed in the Hydrometeorology Duty Officer Manual, will result in adequate notification of key officials within WSH. However, in certain weather-related surface accidents (e.g., train derailments, multi-vehicle highway accidents), where it is suspected NWS products or services may be an issue, the appropriate program official or RH Program Leader should notify the Forensic Services Manager as soon as possible.

6. Protection of Records. The NWS office will take the following steps to safeguard weather records in the event of a major aircraft accident within its county warning area or upon notification of a major weather-factor marine accident, unless otherwise instructed by the Forensic Services Manager.

a. Secure all pertinent service records and other work product issued by the NWS office as soon as possible.



b. Unless specifically requested by WSH or RH, keep the service records/work product in the NWS office for at least 14 days to provide time for determining:

- (1) to what extent weather is a factor, and
- (2) what weather information is required for investigation purposes.

c. In the absence of a request from WSH for weather information, process all records in accordance with normal disposition procedures. Forward records to be sent to the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) by certified mail.

d. In the event of an aircraft or marine accident within the area covered by a Doppler Weather Surveillance Radar, continue to follow normal disposition procedures for archive tapes and/or disks/cartridges unless directed by the Forensic Services Manager to forward relevant records to the NCDC for immediate processing. On occasion, there may be a need to document and/or reproduce products from the AWIPS data base, if available, in connection with a weather-related accident. Notification for such requests will originate from the Forensic Services Manager and coordinated with the NWS office through the appropriate RH.